

B BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA SB237PREVENTION ☐ EDUCATION ☐ ADVOCACY1280 SOUTH 3RD STREET WEST ☐ SUITE 4 ☐ MISSOULA, MONTANA 59801(406) 541-6442 ☐ (406) 541-6443 ☐ (800) 241-6442 ☐ Fax (406) 541-4360www.biamt.org ☐ biam@biamt.org

January 27, 2009

Rep. John Brueggeman, Chair
Senate Highways and Transportation Committee

In support of SB 237, primary seatbelt law

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

The members of our Association ask for your support of this bill, which would increase seatbelt use and prevent needless brain injury.

Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of brain trauma in the United States and cause half of all brain injuries.

Seat and lap belts have been proved to reduce the risk of moderate traumatic brain injury in motor vehicle crashes by 59%, and severe traumatic brain injury by 38%. The combination of seat-and-lap belts with airbags reduced the risk of moderate brain injury by 83% and the risk of severe injury by 75%. Zasler, Katz and Zafonte, *Brain Injury Medicine*, 2006, at 61.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that 100 out of 100,000 people in the United States suffer TBI each year, of which approximately 52,000 die. Estimates of the number of people who have survived a TBI range from 2.5 million to 6.5 million. The range is broad because mild TBI often goes unreported.

The cost of traumatic brain injuries in the United States is estimated at \$48.3 billion annually: \$31.7 billion in hospitalization costs and another \$16.6 billion in costs associated with fatalities.

The CDC estimates the total cost of acute care and rehabilitation for TBI victims in the United States is \$9 billion to \$10 billion per year, not including indirect costs to families and society (e.g., lost earnings, work time, and productivity for family members, caregivers, and employers, or the costs associated with providing social services).

It is estimated that over a lifetime, it can cost between \$600,000 and \$1,875,000 to care for a survivor of severe TBI.

As brain injury survivors, the BIAMT's membership knows that it is possible to rebuild a life after a brain injury. But the losses caused by moderate and even mild brain injury are incalculable.

We cannot undo the brain injuries that we live with, but we can urge you to prevent brain injury in any way that you can, beginning with a primary seatbelt law.

The Brain Injury Association of Montana Board of Directors

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